

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Mt. Adams Institute

Application ID: 13ED147050

Program Name: VetsWork: Environment

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- (+) The statement, "Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate that one million veterans will leave the military between 2011 and 2016" helps document the severity of need for job training programs for veterans.
- (+) The described amount of "maintenance backlog" in combination with the increased interest in public lands due to the downturn in the economy is convincing of the need for programming as it relates to Environmental Stewardship in the United States.
- (+) The applicant fully describes why they selected veterans as the population to be served in this program.
- (+) The application describes the number of Members requested, the service terms needed, and what they will do.
- (+) The applicant describes three specific examples of proposed Member activities at different sites.
- (+) The application addresses the measurable change they expect to see by the end of the grant cycle, and adequately describes how they will measure and report these changes.
- (+) The applicant clearly describes the environmental and economic issues such as having to close parks and visitor centers because there are not enough workers ready to be employed. One of the applicant's main focus is to provide help with job training.
- (+) The applicant clearly describes how many veterans and other volunteers will be recruited and what the Members will be doing to address the needs of the target population.
- (+) The applicant describes their evidence-informed intervention they will use that is taken from AmeriCorps' capacity-building experience.
- (+) The applicant shows detailed and specific data to explain the outcomes expected. Agency partners will provide

reports to AmeriCorps annually to show that there will be an overall positive impact in the program during the three-year grant cycle as evidenced by their success.

(+) The applicant explained how they determined their performance targets in conjunction with their community partners.

(+) The applicant provides a wealth of current and relevant statistical data related to the needs of the Veterans in their target community as well as the environmental conditions that they are seeking to address with this project.

(+) The applicant illustrates the extent and severity of the needs of the veterans that they are seeking to serve with this project through the use of statistical data that shows the rate of unemployment and incidence of mental health problems.

(+) The applicant describes the breadth and scope of the unemployment rates of the target population of veterans in the targeted communities for this project and compares the rates to the overall state rates of unemployment.

(+) The applicant illustrates the need for AmeriCorps members being assigned to support federally-funded public lands and National Parks by describing how those sites have declining conditions as a result of scarce funding sources. They state that the AmeriCorps members will assist in the maintenance of neglected public lands and support the reopening of public areas that are currently closed due to budget constraints.

(+) The applicant clearly states that they are seeking 25 veterans to serve in 25 full-time slots.

(+) The applicant describes how their intervention for veterans is evidenced-informed by citing national reports and evaluation data when describing their rationale and approach for recruiting veterans and assigning them to serve in positions within the environment. They make the case for job training and education for site supervisors to meet the unique needs of the veteran population as strategies for sustainability and long term outcomes for veteran member future career and employment.

(+) The applicant describes the AmeriCorps investment in terms of the impact upon the individual veteran members as well as the host sites and includes statistical projections of anticipated rates of performance accomplishments.

(+) The applicant states that they determined the selected performance targets in partnership with their community stakeholders and potential sponsorship sites.

(+) The applicant has presented a compelling programmatic design that is intended to meet the needs of veterans through opportunities to build skills in the field of environmental stewardship and re-enter civilian life, and which also helps natural resource organizations meet their environmental protection objectives.

(+) The applicant provides compelling evidence that the target community of veterans is distinctly disadvantaged due to higher than normal levels of unemployment.

(+) The applicant appropriately supported their selection of the veterans as the target community with specific data from several state, federal, and veteran organizations. These data validated the higher than normal unemployment

levels and the lack of adequate services to deal with their specific problems, and that there are fewer AmeriCorps programs available with a focus on the environment, especially for entry level positions.

(+) The applicant has a well-developed plan for assigning the slots, which is closely aligned with the program design and allows for additional expansion.

(+) The applicant clearly refers to an evidence-informed design drawn from close interaction with veterans and validated through statistical information from a variety of sources.

(+) The investment by AmeriCorps will result in the ability for veterans to transition more easily into civilian life while assisting in more effective stewardship of public lands and building a commitment to participate in service opportunities.

(+) The applicant provided persuasive information that the proposed interventions are a positive and productive means to assist veterans to transition to a civilian setting while training them in skills necessary for the protection of natural resources, and guiding their community spirit to continue in volunteering where needed.

(-) The majority of statistics offered to address the needs for the environmental stewardship interventions are on the national level, which doesn't adequately document the extent or severity of the needs in the target communities.

(-) The application fails to fully describe the target communities in Washington or Oregon, whether or not they are economically disadvantaged, and why they are chosen.

(-) There is no description of what the organization will accomplish that it would not otherwise accomplish through existing staff and volunteers.

(-) Although the reasons for including specific activities of the program are cited, most of the proposed interventions are not evidence-based or evidence-informed.

(-) The outcomes seem overly optimistic or unattainable based on the proposed project interventions.

(-) The applicant does not provide local data showing support for their need for the program.

(-) While the applicant describes the declining condition of public lands in general and the growing backlog of maintenance issues due to financial constraints, they do not provide statistical data nor specifically describe the conditions, needs, or backlogs of required and unmet maintenance issues for the local targeted public lands and national parks that will be the focus of activities within this project, making it difficult to fully assess the need for the AmeriCorps investment.

(-) There is minimal information on the specific needs of military families, and they provided minimal information for the specific need related to Washington and Oregon.